

September, 2009



www.ci.desoto.tx.us

972.230.9600

City Lights DeSoto, Texas

A publication of the City of DeSoto Community Relations Department



A Message from Mayor Waddle



During this difficult budget cycle for cities throughout the state, it is good to know that DeSoto is in stable financial condition. City staff presented the proposed FY 2009-2010 operating budget to the Council during budget workshops in August. This budget, which will be adopted in September after public hearings, maintains the current level of service without a tax increase, despite a significant decrease in property tax revenue.

We were told back in February by representatives of the Dallas Central Appraisal District, during a Town Hall Meeting on the housing crisis, that DeSoto could expect as much as a 10% reduction in property values due to asset devaluation and foreclosures. Armed with this information, city staff tightened their belts and built a budget with the first priority of maintaining the current service level of fire, police and code enforcement services. It also maintains employee salaries at the "market level," according to results of the annual salary survey.

In addition to maintaining current service levels, the FY 2009-2010 budget and City Council Work Plan will

- Engage a consultant to evaluate the DeSoto market and assess the degree and type of demand that exists for an entertainment venue in DeSoto,
- Provide the City Lights newsletter publication to residents in senior apartments who currently do not receive it because it is distributed with monthly utility bills,
- Continue to pursue the project of providing green energy for the operation of Town Center through solar panels on the roof,
- Begin the input/discussion process with DeSoto residents about mass transit for the DeSoto community.
- Discuss with the other Best Southwest communities the possibility of a regional composting effort and a regional household hazardous waste removal program with a disposal location in the Best Southwest area, and
- Provide lighted street name signs at the intersections of Hampton at Belt Line Road and Hampton at Pleasant Run Road.

We have also seen revenues in our Sanitation Fund erode due to rising costs. For the last seven years, utility customers have paid \$13.07 each month to cover twice weekly garbage collection, weekly recycling and brush collection in addition to funding beautification efforts such as litter removal by the Median Maintenance Crew, street sweeping and enhanced median landscaping. In June, city staff put the issue of rising costs in the Sanitation Fund to the

citizens and asked for their opinion on increasing the rate to continue beautification efforts. Public input was received through blogging on our website and a Town Hall Meeting, and the majority consensus seemed to be that residents were willing to pay more for these services. As a result, utility customers will see their sanitation bill increase by \$1.70, beginning October 1st.

Revenue from sales tax is also expected to reduce due to the poor economy. However, there is a bright spot for DeSoto. We now have a total of five hotels in town who generate what has become a significant amount of revenue through the state Hotel Occupancy Tax charged to their guests. A portion of this Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue comes back to the city to be used primarily to promote local tourism as well as the arts and historic preservation. DeSoto hotel operators have formed a cooperative group to work together to spend these tourism dollars in a way that will benefit the hotels and the city as a whole. They have submitted a plan and have requested funding to use Hotel Occupancy Tax tourism dollars to promote DeSoto to travelers and make them aware of what we have to offer. They also plan to bring in youth sports tournaments and small conventions to DeSoto facilities benefiting overnight stay in our hotels and increasing traffic in local restaurants and businesses.

In these tough times, I'm very pleased that we are able to maintain our service level and property tax rate. The meticulous planning and fiscal responsibility displayed by our City Manager and his staff have allowed us to do this and I applaud them for it. However, due to the ongoing housing crisis, we don't see revenues from property taxes rebounding quickly. As a result, we need to focus on initiatives that will increase sales tax revenue as we go into the FY 2010-2011 budget cycle, in order to continue offering the current level of service to the community. The next few years will be tough for the entire nation, but I feel confident that we will come out of the crisis better and stronger.

Bobby Waddle,
Mayor

Sign up to follow the
City of DeSoto on :



Just log on to <http://twitter.com/desototx>.

Twitter is a free service that allows us to send you quick updates on things of interest that affect you as a citizen of DeSoto. We hope you'll join us!!

Water and Sewer Rate Increase Effective October 1st

The city's water and sewer services operate as an enterprise fund, which means that it operates as a separate entity and the rate charged for water and sewer service is designed to generate revenue sufficient to cover operating expenses. The rate also covers the debt associated with capital improvements to the system including major repair, replacement or system expansion.

In 2009, a rate study was commissioned to determine whether the current rate is sufficient to cover operating expenses. The City of DeSoto purchases treated water from Dallas Water Utilities and our sewer is processed by the Trinity River Authority. Due to increases in our contractual obligations with these entities, as well as rising operating costs, the rate study determined that city water and sewer rates should be increased by 3.5% to meet the objective stated above.

This rate increase is based on usage and low volume users will see a smaller increase in their monthly bills than high volume users. The city also uses a three-tier rate structure, which encourages conservation by charging those who use less a smaller rate. The structure also allows those who choose to use more water the ability to do so with the understanding that they will pay more.

The rate increase is effective, October 1, 2009. If you have questions regarding your water service, please call the Utility Billing Department at 972.230.9627.

Annual Community Garage Sale at the DeSoto Senior Activity Center

Do you have stuff you'd like to sell? If so, bring it to the DeSoto Senior Activity Center Community Garage Sale on Saturday, October 3, 2009, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Senior Activity Center is looking for individuals, groups or associations who would like booth space at the sale. Vendor set up begins at 7:00 a.m. The fee for an 8 ft. X 8 ft. booth space with one table and two chairs is \$25. 8 ft. x 8 ft. booth spaces will be located inside the building and assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. 10 ft. X 10 ft. booths will be available outside for \$15 and will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis also. Senior citizens (55 years and older) who are **current Senior Center members** may purchase a booth space (inside or outside) for \$10. No electrical power will be available for any booth space. No gas powered equipment or any items that may be considered a fire hazard will be allowed inside the building. The sale will be held rain or shine with no refunds. All proceeds from booth sales will go to the vendor. Booth space rentals fees will be used to purchase needed items for the Senior Activity Center.

Concessions will be provided by the Center, so vendors may not sell food items. You may register for booth space at the DeSoto Senior Activity Center, 204 Lion Street. It is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Space is limited, so please register early! For more information call the Senior Activity Center at 972.230.5825.

Even if you don't have items to sell, please come by the Senior Activity Center on October 3rd. You might just find that treasure you have been looking for.

CITY CALENDAR

September

- 1 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 3 Keep DeSoto Beautiful Board Mtg. - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 3 Library Advisory Board Mtg. - 7 p.m. - Library Conference Room
- 4 Sister Cantaloupe Variety Show - Corner Theatre - 7:30 p.m.
- 7 Labor Day Holiday - City offices & facilities closed
- 8 Planning & Zoning Mtg. - City Hall 7 p.m.
- 12 DeSoto Star Search - Corner Theatre - 7 p.m.
- 14 Park Development Corp. Mtg. - 6:30 p.m. - Recreation Center
- 15 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 18 Jazz Concert featuring Tom Braxton - Corner Theatre - 8 p.m.
- 22 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. City Hall
- 26 DeSoto Dining and Dialogue Dinner Event - call 972.230.9648 to attend
- 28 DEDC Board Meeting - noon - City Hall

October

- 1 Keep DeSoto Beautiful Board Mtg. - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 1 Library Advisory Board Mtg. - 7 p.m. - Library Conference Room
- 3 Creekfest - Town Center - noon - 7 p.m.
- 5 Park Development Corp. Meeting - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 6 City Council Meeting - City Hall - 7 p.m.
- 13 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 16 *Master Harold and the Boys* - opens in the Corner Theatre 972.572.0998
- 20 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 26 DEDC Board Meeting - noon - City Hall
- 27 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. - City Hall



Tired of Long Lines When Paying Your Water Utility Bill?

A new self-service station has just been installed in the lobby of City Hall next to the Utility/Municipal Court window. Now you can zip in to City Hall and use this kiosk to initiate water service, pay your utility bill, pay a Municipal Court fine, or apply for a garage sale permit.

Be sure to bring your utility bill with you to use the kiosk, because you will need your account number and PIN to access your account. They are printed on your utility bill. For more information on the new self-service station at City Hall, please call the Utility Billing Department at 972.230.9627.

The DeSoto Arts Commission is accepting Arts Grant Funding Applications through September 30, 2009. To qualify, you must be a registered non-profit organization and your program must benefit DeSoto residents. For more information call 972.230.9648 or visit the city's website at www.ci.desoto.tx.us.

"Hampton Place Estates Is A Special Place" Essay Wins National Contest

Hampton Place Estates, one of DeSoto's more than 50 organized Neighborhood Associations, threw a block party for their neighborhood with ice cream won by resident, Melanie Skipper-Relyea. She submitted the following essay which was awarded the nation-wide grand prize, a neighborhood ice cream party, in the Dreyer's Slow Churned Neighborhood Salute contest.

"Why I Love My Neighborhood"

We moved to a suburb for proximity to big-city amenities but in a small-town environment. Our sedentary, work-absolutely-anywhere lifestyles make it more challenging to build community than ever, even with those living closest to us. In north Texas, we have the additional problem of having back-entry alleys to access our houses, so we can all go weeks without seeing neighbors.

My entry to this contest is a tribute to just one of our great neighbors, the McCall family. We are a family with two small children, one with autism, and often find ordinary life more than a little daunting. When we have had emergencies with our plumbing, Joe McCall has come running to my home before church in a three-piece suit to help. When we brought home children from the hospital, we had baked goods from their kitchen. They brought my children locally grown fruit from their trips. Marci watches our children before my husband comes home from work. We borrow the typical things from our neighbors, like tools, sure, but also a sympathetic ear, and a strong shoulder to cry on.

The McCalls are but one example of how we have found families in

our neighborhood to be giving in times of both the routine and the urgent. Those of us with special needs children often have to rely on the kindness of others. We are very grateful to all our neighbors who have cared for us and our children in many different ways. I'm not the only one. When a house on our block went up in flames a few years back, everyone came out of their houses to bring the fire victims and firefighters drinking water, food, blankets, cell phone access, and a hug.

DeSoto is a special city going through needed revitalization. Foreclosure signs and shuttered businesses appear, but people keep moving here. We have diversity in our city that is to be envied and admired, not avoided. Our greatest asset is not land or tax revenue, but our people. I hope you agree that Hampton Place Estates is as special as I do.

By Melanie Skipper-Relyea, Hampton Place Estates Resident



Members of the Hampton Place Estates Neighborhood Association celebrated with an ice cream party won by resident Melanie Skipper-Relyea. Picture above from left Debra Goldsmith, Marci McCall and Melanie Skipper-Relyea.

DeSoto Dining and Dialogue Dinner, Saturday, September 26th

For more than five years, DeSoto Dining and Dialogue has brought together people from various backgrounds to discuss making DeSoto a more vibrant place for all. By connecting neighbors, the program seeks to build relationships among people from different backgrounds with the ultimate goal of sharing experiences and building a strong community, regardless of color, culture or class.

The next DeSoto Dining and Dialogue dinner event is scheduled for Saturday, September 26, 2009. It's easy to register, just go to the website at desotodininganddialogue.org and fill out the guest registration form before September 8, 2009 or call Kathy (Maples) Jones at 972.230.9648. If a registration is received after September 8th, it will be put on the list to fill cancellations. Once registered, you will be assigned to a dinner table and you'll receive an invitation in the mail to the dinner during the week of September 14th. Once registered, all you have to do is agree to attend the dinner and engage in the discussion.

DeSoto Dining and Dialogue is a volunteer-run organization that provides individuals of all ages, including high school students, who live or work in DeSoto, the opportunity to get to know one another at dinner events with 8 to 10 participants. These dinners are held twice a year in private homes, churches or restaurants all over town on the same night. The discussion is lead by a trained facilitator who guides participants through questions designed to elicit thoughts and opinions on issues facing our community.

DeSoto Dining and Dialogue is primarily successful because families are willing to open their homes and host, at their own expense, a

dinner for a diverse group of citizens. Facilitators and other volunteers willingly give of their time and expertise because they believe in the program. However, we need continuing community participation to keep the program strong which means that we need committed citizens like you, to participate in the program as guests.

Join us in building a strong community by registering to attend the dinner on September 26th. For more information on the DeSoto Dining and Dialogue Program, please call Kathy (Maples) Jones at 972.230.9648.



Check the City Website for Emergency Alerts

Next time you log on to the City of DeSoto website at www.ci.desoto.tx.us, be sure to check a new feature that has just been added. Look for the Emergency Alerts button on the bottom left side of the home page. Generally, the alert button will be green but when a situation arises that causes the city to issue an Emergency Alert, the button will flash red. When you see the red button, click on it and follow the link to special information about the alert situation.

This Emergency Alert will be used to inform citizens about a variety of issues such as road closings, or emergency situations which require immediate action such as a drinking water contamination, possible flooding or a chemical spill. For more information on emergency alerts, please call the City of DeSoto at 972.230.9600.



The Blue Cow Coffee Company

Is open for business in the foyer of the
DeSoto Public Library
In Town Center
Hours: 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily

Menu Includes:

Drip coffee, teas, sodas, juice drinks,
blended drinks, homemade soups,
Panini and deli sandwiches, stuffed
pretzels and breakfast burritos. We
invite you to check them out.

CREEKFEST

Celebrating our Culture & Heritage

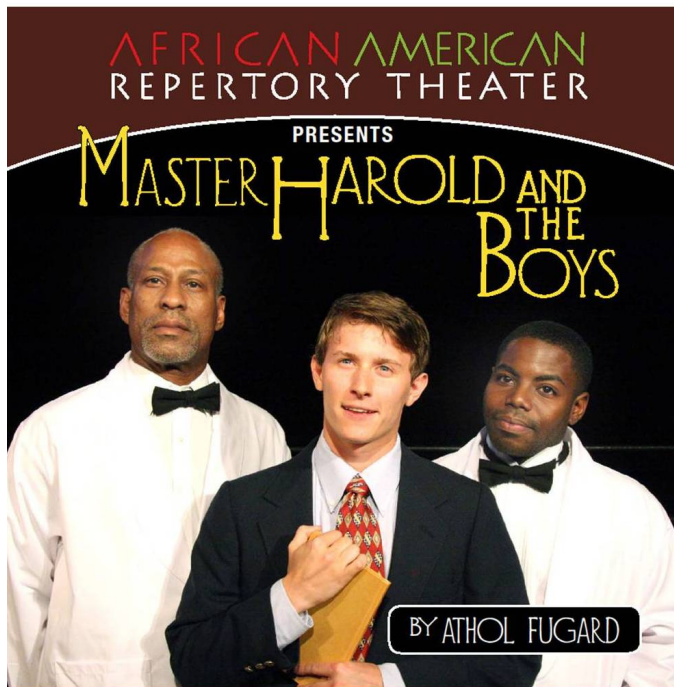
Saturday, October 3rd Noon to 7 p.m.

At DeSoto Town Center, 211 E. Pleasant Run Road
Vendor Booths, Children's Activities,
Entertainment, Food and Family Fun

In conjunction with Creekfest, the DeSoto Chamber of Commerce is hosting **Wheels**, a motorcycle and car show sponsored by Chuck Fairbanks Chevrolet. Come see classic cars and the newest models on display from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Oct. 3rd in the Albertson's parking lot at 901 Polk Street. For more information on **Wheels** call the DeSoto Chamber at 972.224.3565.



For Creekfest vendor information, call Carolyn Campbell at 972.230.9651.



Directed by Sharon Bengé

Show Dates & Times:

October 16 - November 1, 2009

Thursday - Sunday Nights @ 7:30pm **\$20**

Saturday & Sunday Matinee @ 2:30pm **\$15**

Preview Performance on

October 15 @ 7:30pm **\$10**

DeSoto Corner Theatre
211 E. Pleasant Run
DeSoto, TX 75115

To Purchase Tickets:

Box Office - 972.572.0998

Web - www.aareptheater.com

Sponsored by:



The DeSoto Arts Commission Presents:

Tom Braxton - In Concert

Friday, September 18th 8 p.m.

DeSoto Corner Theatre - Tickets \$10

Saxophonist Tom Braxton is a versatile instrumentalist, a charismatic performer, and a gifted composer whose distinct, melodic sound thrills audiences of all ages and leaves them wanting more.

For tickets call, 972.230.9648



Save The Date

Friends of Tri-City Animal Shelter Gala
Celebrating the Grand Opening of the New Shelter



Date: September 13, 2009

Time: 2:00 - 6:00 PM

Place: Enchanted Memories
Duncanville, TX

Phone: 972-291-1198